

Solution to South Tahoe's city attorney vacancy

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe will be using the law firm Burke, Williams & Sorensen out of Oakland when City Attorney Tom Watson leaves at the end of the month.

Nira Doherty, a partner in the firm, has been on retainer with the city for a while. She is used in special cases, most notably the marijuana regulations. Doherty worked in the South Lake Tahoe City Attorney's Office prior to going into private practice.

Mayor Austin Sass told *Lake Tahoe News*, "She is the foreseeable city attorney until council decides to do something different."

Mayor Pro Tem Wendy David told *Lake Tahoe News*, "We are offering Nira Doherty an interim city attorney position."

There is disagreement among the council members whether a full time city attorney should be hired as has been the norm in South Lake Tahoe or if a firm should be on retainer and do the legal work.

"For me she is a good fit for what our needs are right now. We have not talked about anything beyond that right now," Sass said.

Sass said the appointment has no end date, which contradicts David's statement saying this is interim, which by definition is temporary.

Sass said the details of Doherty's employment have not been finalized so they are not yet public information. This means it's not known what she will be making or what the city will

be paying the firm for her to be here.

Sass said Doherty will be in town for council meetings and other times, but the structure of her time in South Lake Tahoe or hours doing work for the city has not been released.

Sass said he spoke to recruitment firms who said even if the city were to want to hire an in-house city attorney, it would be best to start the process after the holidays. This was the same thing the city manager told him and the rest of the council when Watson tendered his resignation earlier this summer.